



Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

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Dear Friends,

Advent greetings of hope as you journey in this season of spiritual renewal and prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ.

This December 24th marks the first anniversary of a global ecumenical prayer vigil, initiated by ACT Alliance, inviting people to pray peace in the Middle East on the 24th of each month. The vigil is intended to be a monthly reminder to pray for the Christian communities in Palestine and Israel, for all those who are suffering in the Holy Land, for Palestinians and Israelis, and for peace in the Middle East and the world. The ELCIC formally joined the prayer vigil on Palm Sunday, March 24, 2013.

As we gather to celebrate the birth of Jesus, we cannot help but think about the land where he was born. This year I invite you to also remember the current residents of Bethlehem, Palestine, Israel and the region, especially those in Syria and those Syrians in refugee camps in neighbouring countries, by including a prayer for peace in the Middle East in your Prayers of Intercession on Christmas Eve.

You may wish to use this or a similar prayer:

Holy God, as we celebrate the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, we remember the people of the Middle East and the desperate need for peace. We pray for an end to violence and occupation. Send your spirit to support all who seek a just and lasting peace, and encourage the Christian communities of the Holy Land who bear witness to the good news of the birth of your Son.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Additional prayer resources and information about the vigil are available at: <http://actpalestineforum.org/vigil/>.

I pray for God's blessing on you all as you gather in congregations, from coast to coast to coast, to worship God and to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World. And I thank you this and every day for partnership as a church *In Mission for Others*.

Yours in Christ

The Rev. Susan C. Johnson,
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada